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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: OSCE HEAD TAKES ADVANTAGE OF
"POSITIVE MISUNDERSTANDINGS"

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11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky, Head of the OSCE Center in Astana, told the Charge d'Affaires during a luncheon on February 1 that the OSCE and Kazakhstan have politely differed over words and perceptions, a tendency that he called "positive misunderstandings." The dissonance has allowed the OSCE to take the government at its word, and raise issues it might not otherwise have been able to discuss publicly. But, Kazakhstan sometimes uses the differences to slip past the hard work on its third dimension shortcomings. Keltchewsky cautioned that this was something member states needed to watch and counter. Regarding the possibility of an OSCE Summit in 2010, Keltchewsky recommended a "wait and see" approach. "Kazakhstan has something to sell," he said. "We should bargain to make sure we get the best possible price for it." END SUMMARY.

KAZAKHSTAN'S STRONG PUSH FOR AN OSCE SUMMIT

13. (SBU) During a two-hour lunch at the residence of the Deputy Chief of Mission, the Head of the Center for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Astana, Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky, commented on Kazakhstan's priorities as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in 12010. He said Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev's top priority is to convene a Summit of OSCE members, possibly in Vienna or Madrid. Keltchewsky said that Spain has been very active in the OSCE and has expressed a willingness to host the Summit. "Of course," he opined, "we have to be in favor of a Summit. What else can we say? But it must have substance and produce results." Keltchewsky was reluctant to attach conditions to a Summit, but said that Kazakhstan must meet certain "pre-requisites" to justify the participation of heads of state. He added, "The question is where, and when, to hold the Summit," noting that it could conceivably take

place in 2011, although he acknowledged that would "deeply offend" the Kazakhstani government.

14. (SBU) Keltchewsky said that the idea of an informal Ministerial was suggested by OSCE Secretary General Mark Perren de Brishambo in Astana in October 2009. Keltchewsky said that Saudabayev pressed hard for a firm commitment to a Summit in 2010, and Brishambo proposed holding an informal meeting with OSCE Foreign Ministers in the middle of 2010 as a compromise. According to Keltchewsky, Saudabayev was visibly unhappy with this arrangement, but agreed to it in the end. "Getting a Summit is (Saudabayev's) only task," said Keltchewsky. "He is under orders from the top." Keltchewsky said he was not opposed to a Summit in principle, but recommended a "wait and see" approach. "Kazakhstan has something to sell," he said. "We should not be victims here. We should not allow Kazakhstan to play us. We should bargain to make sure we get the best possible price for it." He said that a "jubilee Summit" to mark the 35th anniversary of the Helsinki Accords, the 20th anniversary of the Paris Declaration, and the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II was not sufficient justification to gather OSCE heads of state.

15. (SBU) Keltchewsky admitted that previous gatherings -- such as the Istanbul Summit in 1999 -- have produced few tangible results, but he attributed that to international politics. "The states are playing a game," he said. "They agree to misunderstand their agreements." He suggested that a Summit in 2010 could be similar, in that member states could speak positively about areas of common ground, while avoiding areas of disagreement.

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EAST AND WEST STILL DIVIDED

16. (SBU) In describing the relationship between East and West since the end of the Cold War, Keltchewsky said that in his opinion "there has been no -- or very little -- progress in the dialogue on security matters." Citing Russian President Medvedev's proposed European security charter, Keltchewsky said that Russia "completely misunderstands the Western position on security issues." He said Medvedev's proposal relies entirely on United Nations resolutions that are not legally binding, and focuses exclusively on "hard security" issues to prevent armed conflict, which Keltchewsky said were not as relevant today.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

17. (SBU) According to Keltchewsky, the main priorities for the OSCE now are economic cooperation, the Human Dimension, and the rule of law -- not conflict prevention. He insisted that progress and reform in these areas could increase confidence among member states, even more than military cooperation. "These are the issues we should discuss at a Summit," he said. He suggested that there is a persistent cultural divide between East and West, and noted that the Russian translation of "Human Dimension" ("gumanitarnoe izmereniye") does not capture the true meaning of the term, and can lead to misunderstanding on the issues. Rather than an emphasis on the inalienable human rights of the individual, for example, the Russian translation stresses the rights of a group of individuals who have been granted protection by the state. "That is totally different from the Western concept," he insisted. When asked if Kazakhstan's leadership understood the nuances, Keltchewsky said that Deputy Foreign Minister Konstantin Zhigalov did, "but he can only share 50% of it with the top. He has to swallow the rest, because he knows they won't want to hear it."

"POSITIVE MISUNDERSTANDINGS" OPEN A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

18. (SBU) Turning to Kazakhstan, Keltchewsky said that the country is still best characterized as a newly independent

state, not as an emerging democracy in a state of transition.

"Kazakhstan is the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, not an independence movement," he stated. Nevertheless, he said that the OSCE Center has had some success in Kazakhstan and has benefitted from a series of "positive misunderstandings" that have enabled the Center to work in areas, such as the Human Dimension, that the government might otherwise not have allowed. For example, he told the Charge that a government-supported institute, the Institute of Parliaments, approached the Center asking for advice and support for a conference on the OSCE. Keltchewsky understood that the institute simply wanted to promote Kazakhstan's role as Chairman-in-Office, but he agreed to provide support nevertheless, and was able to shift the agenda to focus on the Human Dimension, and invite several leaders from civil society.

PRESIDENT FOR LIFE

¶9. (SBU) Commenting on the general state of democracy in Kazakhstan, Keltchewsky said that the situation is "even worse" now than it was one year ago. He called President Nazarbayev a "good khoziyan" (boss, or master), gave Nazarbayev credit for his adroit handling of the large ethnic minority populations in Kazakhstan, and complimented Nazarbayev's proposed National Unity Doctrine. He also suggested that Nazarbayev does not have 100% control over all of the factions vying for power in Kazakhstan, noting that the National Security Committee (KNB) and Ministry of

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Internal Affairs enjoy some degree of autonomy. Q(GQp Kazakhstan now that they are

Chairman-in-Office," he insisted.

GREENQ-Q-U-WQreens are good camouflage," not a legitimate opposition party. He speculated that the Green PaQQA0e also claimed that the "St. Petersburg mafia -- including (Russian Prime Minister Vladimir) Putin -- is much more liberal than the other mafias in Russia," because of their exposure to the West, and their degrees in modern economics and law. (NOTE: Keltchewsky is a French career diplomat whose family emigrated from St. Petersburg; he served as France's Consul General in St. Petersburg from 1998-2002. END NOTE).

DEMOCRACY AND ETHNICITY

¶12. (SBU) Keltchewsky told the Charge that he believes there is greater potential for political reform among the ethnic Russian population of Kazakhstan than among the ethnic Kazakh population. He pointed out, for example, that most of the leaders of Kazakhstan's civil society organizations are ethnic Russians. The Charge politely disagreed, noting that there are many outstanding think tank and NGO representatives of every ethnicity in Kazakhstan. Further, there is no ethnic Russian political movement, or community leader, and that it is likely that ethnic Russians with initiative, ambition, and skills gravitated to civil society because most of the leadership positions in government have been occupied by ethnic Kazakhs.

¶13. (SBU) Talk then turned to the 2009 census, the results of which were released on February 10. According to the census, 63% of Kazakhstan's 16.2 million are ethnic Kazakhs, an increase of 26% since the 1999 census. (NOTE: According to the census, ethnic Russians comprise 23% of the population, Uzbeks 3%, Ukrainians 2%, Uigurs 1.4%, Tatars 1.2%, Germans 1.1%, and other ethnic groups 4.5%. END NOTE).

Keltchewsky said the percentage of ethnic Kazakhs was "a political figure," suggesting the data were manipulated for political purposes. He also said that if the figures are correct, then nearly half of the ethnic German population has left Kazakhstan, "likely the most active and talented half."

THE OSCE AND AFGHANISTAN

¶13. (SBU) When asked what the OSCE could realistically accomplish in Afghanistan, Keltchewsky admitted that the

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organization did not have an ambitious agenda. "Kazakhstan is interested in Afghanistan," he said, "only because the United States is interested." He noted that Kazakhstan has announced a program of bilateral economic and educational assistance, and suggested that Kazakhstan could contribute to efforts to stem drug trafficking, but opined that Kazakhstan "is in no position to contribute to the stabilization of the country."

¶14. (SBU) COMMENT: A conversation with Ambassador Keltchewsky is never predictable, prosaic, or short. He has a fascinating personal history, and valuable experience, in the region, but his comments frequently reflect his own personal, somewhat elitist views than those of the organization he represents. His vision is understandably formed by his vantage point, a fact that is worth keeping in mind as Kazakhstan and the OSCE member states continue to shape the ambitious agenda the Chairman-in-Office has set for ¶2010. END COMMENT.
SPRATLEN